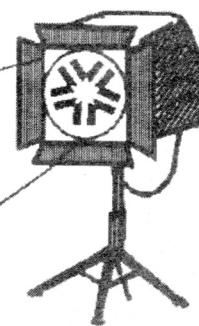


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging



VOLUME XXV, ISSUE 1

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

January 2014



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*By John M. Thompson,
Ph.D., FAAMA*

As this issue of "Spotlight on Aging" is the first edition for 2014, I would like to talk about health and wellness. These topics are always relevant, regardless if you are an individual who will be turning 60 years of age this year or a seasoned senior. By focusing on these measures now, we can help ourselves to remain physically active for many years.

According to 2010 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were approximately 2.3 million nonfatal fall injuries among older adults treated in emergency departments, and more than 662,000 of these patients were hospitalized due to hip fractures, lacerations and head traumas — or even admitted to nursing homes.

The total direct medical costs associated with these falls were \$30.4 billion. As you can imagine, seniors who have suffered these kinds of injuries find it difficult to remain independent, and may suffer from an increased risk of early death. In extreme cases, 21,700 seniors died from unintentional fall injuries in 2010.

Beyond the fact that seniors are prone to fall injuries, some seniors live with different types of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and arthritis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 out of 10 deaths annually among Americans are linked to chronic diseases.

About 25 percent of people with chronic conditions have limitations with one or more activities of daily living (ADL). Arthritis is the most common cause of disability, impacting nearly 19 million Americans who report that they have issues with performing some ADLs. Diabetes can also adversely impact ADLs when individuals go blind or require non-traumatic lower-extremity amputations due to the condition.

Although I have shared some staggering data with you, seniors and future seniors can take control of their lives to prevent falls and prevent or alleviate ailments associated with a number of chronic diseases. Seniors can access free wellness programs at any of the District of Columbia Office on Aging's Senior Wellness Centers, which are located in Wards 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

At these senior wellness centers, you can engage in tai chi classes to improve balance, and take part in strength training classes to build leg strength to prevent falls. You can exercise on the treadmill and the elliptical machine, and take aerobics classes to prevent or alleviate the ailments associated with cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis and stroke.

Moreover, aerobic exercises strengthen your immune system, which means that you will be healthy, active and productive rather than being sick at home. Lastly, aerobic exercise strengthens your heart and your body's ability to supply oxygen throughout your body, which helps it to function properly, while burning calories and reducing body fat.

For those who frequently come to our senior wellness centers, we welcome you back in 2014! If you are a District senior age 60 and older and have not been to one of our senior wellness centers, we welcome you to get started this week by visiting any of our six locations. See the list at right, or contact the District of Columbia Office on Aging at 202-724-5626 for more information.

Centenarian Receives Mayoral Award for Service

Mayor Gray recently presented 104-year-old Virginia McLaurin with the National Service Award during the Mayor's Community Service Awards. The awards are presented annually to District residents making a notable impact through volunteerism and service.

Grandma McLaurin, as she is known, is a long-time resident of the District, and was aware of the challenges the city faced when meeting the academic needs of students with severe special educational needs and disabilities.

In 1994, because she lives near C. Melvin Sharpe Health School, she decided to volunteer to make a difference in the lives of the mentally and physically disabled children attending the school by working alongside the teaching staff and administration as a United Planning Organization (UPO) Foster Grandparent.

She has volunteered an average of 40 hours per week for the past 19 years. Grandma helps these special children acquire and develop social skills, basic skills in speech, reading, writing and math. Grandma believes that love conquers all, saying, "I love everybody."

After the ceremony, while waiting for her ride with Cheryl Christmas, program manager for the



D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray presented 104-year-old Virginia McLaurin with the National Service Award during the Mayor's Community Service Awards.

Foster Grandparent Program, she was discussing upcoming calendar events. When Christmas was trying to recall one of them, Grandma McLaurin quickly chimed in to correct her.

The centenarian takes part in many activities, but is definitely committed to the children she serves. At age 104, Grandma McLaurin continues to walk the two blocks from her home to the school without assistance.

Her presence as a volunteer inspires everyone to work beyond the aches and pains of age, to dance in the face of setbacks and loss, and to give love freely to all. Foster Grandparent McLaurin is a shining example of the commitment to service and humanity that is the essence of volunteerism.

Happy New Year!

Start off the year by adopting a healthier lifestyle! Attend one of six wellness centers citywide designed for persons age 60 and older. Participation is free for District residents age 60 and older

Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center Ward

3531 Georgia Ave. NW • 202-727-0338

Hattie Holmes Senior Wellness Center

324 Kennedy St. NW • 202-291-6170

Model Cities Senior Wellness Center

1901 Evarts St. NE • 202-635-1900

Hayes Senior Wellness Center

500 K St. NE • 202-727-0357

Washington Seniors Wellness Center

3001 Alabama Ave. SE • 202-581-9355

Congress Heights Senior Wellness Center

3500 Martin Luther King Jr., Ave. SE
202-563-7225

The BODYWISE program promotes health, wellness and fitness for persons 60 years of age or older in the District of Columbia. Some of the benefits that may be achieved include: an increase in participant's cardiovascular efficiency, muscular strength, flexibility and overall life satisfaction. A key component of the program is to promote health, wellness and disease prevention knowledge. Call 202-274-6651 for more information.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

VINCENT C. GRAY, MAYOR

Mystery Shopper Scams Grow Bigger and More Sophisticated: Don't Get Sucked in by Con Artists

Message from the D.C. Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking

The articles in places like *Forbes* magazine and the website Gizmodo describe it as one of “Seven Fun Ways for Retirees to Make Money” and an easy way to “Make Money on Your Lunch Break.”

Mystery shopping can be fun and reasonably profitable. It can also be a scam designed to separate you from your money before you realize it's even gone.

Real mystery-shopping companies pay people to shop at the companies' clients and report their experiences. Big retailers, for instance, will contract with mystery-shopping companies to find out how their sales people treat customers.

Started in the 1940s, mystery shopping has since grown into a \$1.5 billion business, says the trade association Mystery Shopper Providers Association, which estimates 1.5 million Americans are at least occasionally mystery shoppers.

“Mystery shopping is the only reliable way to quantify and benchmark the customer experience,” says the trade association in its pitch to clients. “Mystery shopping provides data that lets the business owner make quick adjustments so that the customer's expectations are met

and the customer is satisfied. That brings the customer back, builds loyalty and allegiance, and protects the bottom line.”

How the scams work

But as the industry has grown, so have the once penny-ante scams involving the industry now grown to cost victims several thousand dollars.

Here's how it works, according to the National Association of Mystery Shoppers, which represents the shopper side of the industry: Someone, often a woman, will call offering to pay you to mystery shop. Or you may get the cashier's check or money order unsolicited in the mail, typically from \$1,000 to \$4,500, for you to deposit in your bank, deducting a couple of hundred for your fee.

You're then supposed to wire the balance to them, usually to an address in another country, often Canada, supposedly in order to evaluate a money transmitter like Western Union. By the time your bank discovers the check you deposited is a fake, you're out the entire amount, plus you're potentially liable for multiple bank charges, and there's no way to recover your money. What's more, the scam artist may also steal personal information to tap into your credit cards or ac-

counts.

“Scams involving counterfeit checks have become one of the most prevalent type of frauds in North America,” said Andrea Rosen, Canada's deputy commissioner of competition. “These scams are a particular concern since they target unemployed people anxious to earn money in the current economic climate.”

The Toronto Strategic Partnership, formed in 2000 to fight cross-border fraud, focuses on fighting scams like this (Toronto is the Canadian capital of white-collar crime.) The partnership consists of Canadian consumer protection and law enforcement officials and representatives from British law enforcement and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and Postal Inspection Service. Just two con artists arrested by Canadian police scammed people for \$150,000.

These new scams are a big step up from the old penny-ante con where scam artists would buy classified ads and get potential shoppers to send \$100 to start getting assignments.

There are two major warning signs of the new scam: Legitimate mystery shopping companies don't directly contact potential shoppers, says the Mystery Shopper Provider Association. And they rarely

send a check before you've even completed your assignment.

The District's Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking hasn't received any formal complaints about mystery shopping scams so far, but two elderly men at a fraud-prevention event recently complained to the department's consumer advocate that they had received checks in the mail in the last year. Neither man deposited them.

Last year, New York State's attorney general shut down two websites that conned people into accepting \$2,000 bogus checks in return for a \$300 “fee.”

Uncertain economic times like these create rich hunting grounds for these scam artists, said Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. “These scams,” he said, “are particularly insidious because they target individuals looking for ways to bolster their income in today's challenging job environment.”

Mystery shoppers find assignments through ads online and in newspapers from legitimate companies. These companies usually only pay shoppers after they've finished their assignments and filed reports. If someone wants to send

See **SCAMS**, page 30

Be Prepared for Winter Emergencies

Now is the time to prepare for possible winter emergencies. Once you learn of a cold or winter weather alert, such as a winter storm warning, listen to the broadcast media about the weather conditions.

Seniors are urged to follow certain protective measures, including: staying in warm places, wearing several layers of dry clothing, wearing a windproof outer layer, rescheduling appointments if possible, and storing canned goods and prescription medicines in case you cannot get out to a store.

See www.72hours.dc.gov or www.snow.dc.gov for additional important information.

Here are important phone numbers that also may be helpful in cold weather emergencies.

IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

• Emergency Assistance 911

In a life-threatening situation, call 911 for Police, Fire and ambulance services. There is a charge for DC ambulance transportation to healthcare facilities. Medicare Part A recipients can be reimbursed.

• Hypothermia/Shelter Hotline 202-399-7093 or (800) 535-7252

The hotline offers assistance to persons in need of overnight shelter, and support for those living on the streets.

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

• DC Consumer and Regulatory Affairs 202-442-9557

If the heating system is not working in your rental apartment building, notify the property management. If you do not receive a response, you can call the Housing Inspections Office for assistance during business hours. On weekends and after hours, call the Office of Emergency Management at 202-727-6161.

• DC Call Center 202-311

3-1-1 is the number to report public streets that need snow and ice clearing and removal. It's also the main number for DC residents to report a problem or violation, offer feedback to the Mayor, or obtain government information.

• Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency 202-727-6161

This office can give you information

about shelters, where to get blankets, heaters and oil, and whom to contact for other assistance. Also for non-medical emergency assistance and service information on holidays, weekends and after hours. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

• D.C. Office on Aging 202-724-5626

The Information and Assistance Office can link seniors with needed services and provide general information on keeping warm. The Office is open

Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

• D.C. Energy Office 3-1-1

Emergency energy assistance is available to low-income District residents who have received a disconnection notice for electric or gas service, or are currently disconnected. Assistance is also available to residents without home heating oil. The amount of assistance is based on household size, total household income, heating source, and type of dwelling.

Citizen Snow Team Volunteers Needed

Serve DC, the Mayor's Office on Volunteerism, is seeking volunteers from across the District to join the 2013-2014 Citizen Snow Team that will clear the sidewalks of elderly and disabled residents after it snows.

The District requires property owners (residential and commercial) to clear the sidewalks sur-

rounding their property within 24-hours after a snowfall. Even a dusting of snow can be too much for elderly or disabled residents to shovel. Volunteers are needed to make winter a little easier on everyone.

Persons interested in volunteering their time to help those in need can register by calling 202-727-8421 or visit www.serve.dc.gov.

Seniors Celebrate Holiday at Annual Event

More than 3,200 seniors enjoyed the Mayor's Annual Senior Holiday Celebration held at the DC Armory last month. D.C. Office on Aging Executive Director John M. Thompson introduced Mayor Vincent C. Gray, who greeted the seniors and spoke of the great things the District is doing to improve transportation for seniors, including increasing the budget to serve more seniors, increasing the number of life support and medical transportation trips, and providing more recreational trips for senior citizens.

The event was held under the theme,

Live, Work and Play: An Age-Friendly Holiday Celebration. The exhibit area included many government and community-based resources providing information, immunizations and health screenings, free facials, manicures, massages, giveaways and much more. A festive holiday meal was served by volunteers from the Armed Forces, PEPCO and the JR ROTC.

The MC for the event was Robert "Captain Fly" Frye, host on **WPFW 89.3 FM** and **WYCB's Senior Zone**. The featured performer for the event was local R&B group HALO. Other

performers included Captain Fly and friends for the holiday including **The Philly Sound**. Senior performers for the event included the MC Steppers performing "Rhythm Nation," and the TR/Crest Soulinesters performing a dance to "Jazzy Lady."

Senior participants from the Vida Senior Center sang "Feliz Navidad," and the API Senior Center Silver Singers sang a holiday medley of songs in Chinese, Mandarin and English.

Seniors received a workout from Hayes Senior Wellness Center fitness coordinator William Yates, which in-

cluded dance movement and yoga. Many of the attendees stayed on the dance floor hand dancing, performing line dances like the "Wobble," and just enjoying the music that was provided.

Known as the District's largest holiday event held for seniors, the event is hosted annually by the D.C. Office on Aging and its Senior Service Network. In its 16th year, the free event brings seniors from across the city to celebrate the season. This year, the event was rescheduled because of inclement weather forecast for the area in early December.



Mayor Vincent C. Gray joined hundreds of seniors for the Mayor's Annual Senior Holiday Celebration, held at the D.C. Armory



Those at the event received information on DCOA services.



The MC Steppers performed "Rhythm Nation."



DCOA Executive Director Dr. John Thompson, Mayor Vincent C. Gray and Lester Austin of the Social Security Administration attended the holiday celebration.



Commission on Aging Chair Romaine Thomas brings greetings during the event.



Local R&B group HALO performed at the celebration.

Community Calendar

January events

7th and 21st • noon

Join in the D.C. Caregivers Chat Online at Noon, designed to provide resources, tips and other information to assist persons caring informally for older adults. If you miss the noon chat, go back to the site (<http://dcoa.dc.gov/page/caregiver-chat>), and hit replay to view the conversation. For more information, contact Linda.Irizarry@dc.gov or 202-535-1442.

9th • 10 a.m. to noon

DCOA and the Office of Unified Communications will present Smart911 to residents of Fort Lincoln. The presentation will be held at 2855 Fort Lincoln Dr. NE. Residents will have an opportunity to sign up for a safety profile designed to give first responders important information on homes and their occupants when contacted for emergency assistance. Residents will also learn more about programs and services

available to assist them. For more information, contact darlene.nowlin@dc.gov or call 202-727-8364.

11th and 12th • 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

DCOA will have a booth at the NBC4 2014 Health & Fitness Expo at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Halls B & C, Booth 1541, 801 Mt. Vernon Pl. NW. Join us for this great annual event health and fitness demonstrations, resources, free giveaways and more. For details about the event, call 202-249-3600.

14th • 11:30 a.m.

Learn how to prevent bedbugs at a program at the Kibar Nutrition Site, 1519 Islamic Way NW. For reservations, call Vivian Grayton at 202-529-8701.

16th • 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DCOA will present a Community Health and Infor-

mational Fair at Holy Temple of Christ Church, 439 12th St. NE. Come out and receive valuable information on DCOA programs and services, and receive health screenings and resources to keep you safe. For more information, call Alice Thompson at 202-535-1321.

20th • 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DCOA Executive Director John M. Thompson, Ph.D., FAAMA will discuss the Affordable Care Act and host a Community Health and Informational Fair at Bethesda Baptist Church, 1808 Capitol Ave. NE. Contact Shirley Mitchell at 301-318-2990 for more information.

23rd and 28th • 11:30 a.m.

Learn about Medicare savings programs on Jan. 23 at the Kibar Nutrition Site, 1519 Islamic Way NW, and on Jan. 28 at the Edgewood Terrace Nutrition site, 1519 4th St. NW.

Seeking Centenarians

The D.C. Office on Aging is preparing for the Annual Salute to District of Columbia Centenarians. If you or someone you know will be 100 years of age or older by April 30, please let us know so that they may be registered

as a District of Columbia Centenarian.

All centenarians will be invited to attend a special luncheon in their honor. You may call Darlene Nowlin at 202-727-8364 or email darlene.nowlin@dc.gov for more information.

Seniors and Food in the District

DCOA Executive Director John M. Thompson, Ph.D. was a recent guest columnist for the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. The column focused on the District's efforts to combat hunger among older residents.

According to the American Commu-

nity Survey 2011 estimates, there were nearly 70,000 seniors age 65 years and older who headed households in the Washington Metropolitan Region with incomes under \$30,000 annually.

To read the column and find out more, visit www.nfesh.org.

Mayor's Commission on HIV/AIDS

Mayor Vincent C. Gray recently swore in members of the Commission on HIV/AIDS, which included government and community representatives who will work to continue progress and save lives. New members include DCOA Executive Director John M. Thompson.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 15 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases in the District

of Columbia are among older adults. While this is a slow increase over several years, 75 percent of older adults are late testers, meaning that they test within 12 months of HIV contraction and are typically diagnosed with AIDS at the same time.

For more information on older adults and HIV/AIDS, see http://bit.ly/hiv_seniors.

Scams

From page 28

you a check before you have done anything, especially to test a wire service's fund transfers, beware.

So you're not accepting checks, you're not accepting solicitations for work by phone: Now, how do you tell whether the companies that are advertising are legitimate? Most will send you an email or require you to log in to get an assignment. You can check them with the Better Business Bureau or with the trade association; you could even Google them. Don't hesitate to call and ask questions. If there's no phone number on the company's website, that could be a bad sign.

If they ask for money upfront on a website for certification, a directory of mystery shopping companies, or a guaranty of a job, they are probably shady, says the Federal Trade Commission, since all this information is available on the Web for free.

They may try to sell visions of you checking into fancy hotels or dining in fashionable restaurants, but mystery

shoppers tell the FTC it's at best a part-time job for most people.

If you try to get your money back, says the FTC, "usually you are out of luck. Either the business doesn't return the phone calls, or if it does, it's to try another pitch."

If you have been the victim of a scam, or even merely been contacted by one of these con artists, contact the District's Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking at www.disb.dc.gov or 202-442-7832.

You can also find more information on the scam and report problems to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov and www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/.

"Con artists are constantly upping their game by coming up with new scams and figuring out ways to use new media to defraud people, so we want to make sure people are aware of the many pitfalls out there," said Gregory Marsillo, director of enforcement at the Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking. "If you think you may be the victim of a financial scam like this in the District, we want to hear from you."

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

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Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

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